

MINUTES

**The Challenge Academy Trust
Members Board
Monday 16 December 2019, 4pm**

PRESENT:

David Mowatt (DMo) - Member
Matthew Grant (MG) – CEO
Howard Platt (HP) - Trustee
Adrienne Laing (AL) – CET
Andrew Moorcroft (AM) – CET
Damian McGuire (DM) – CET
Tim Long (TL) – CET

IN ATTENDANCE:

Lisa Adams – Clerk

Part One – non confidential business

1. Welcome

Members were welcomed to the meeting.

2. Absence and apologies

Apologies were received from Steven Broomhead and Chris Penn.

3. Declaration of personal interests

There were no declarations of personal interest.

4. Election of chairperson

Election of chairperson

David Mowatt was elected as Chairperson

5. Membership

- **Appointment of Dr Peter Claus – member (need a quorum for this)**

A copy of Dr P Claus credentials were circulated for members to consider. It was noted that he is known to the trust and has worked with the college for a number of years. MG informed members that he has asked if it is possible to attend meetings via skype.

- **Appointment of Chris Penn – member by virtue of diocese (trust articles and scheme of delegation)**

MG informed members that he has met with Chris Penn who is keen to support the work at Sir Thomas Boteler and the trust. **HP asked** if he has an educational background. It was noted that he does.

6. Minutes

HP raised concerns about the attendance at Trustee and committee meetings. It was noted that Gemma Johnson and Toby McCormac have since resigned. This currently leaves two trustee vacancies.

Susan Richardson's appointment was agreed at the last members meeting via e-mail.

DMo asked about the formal process for appointing trustees. It was noted that the Members Board have to approve trustee appointments. **DMo asked** about the role of the Members Board. The board are required to receive the audited accounts and approve the scheme of delegation. **DMo asked** if there should be a criteria for appointing trustees. It was suggested that a review of the current skills is carried out identify any gaps. It was noted that a skills audit was completed when the trust was set up. MG felt that with the current skill level there isn't an immediate requirement to fill the vacancies. DMo felt that if it is the members role to appoint trustees there should be a process in place. MM suggested that as people leave the trust the members should look at replacing the skills they have lost. HP noted that one issue with filling vacancies is the timing of these meetings to approve the appointments. It was felt that trustees could be appointed in the interim until endorsed by members.

Action: clerk to e-mail all Trustees to ask for an updated CV and send to members

7. Executive report

Broomfields and Meadowside joined TCAT on 1 December 2019.

A bid for the free school has been submitted and it is anticipated that the outcome will be known in January.

The RSC carried out their review. HP, TL, AM and MG met with the RSC at the beginning of the term.

HP noted that the trustees are incredibly supportive of the work that goes on and the amount of work that was put in to produce a detailed annual report. It was felt that the report could act as a prospectus for new schools who are interested in joining. **A member asked** where the free school will be based. It is proposed that it will be adjacent to Bruche Primary which is not the preferred base. **MM asked** if the plan for it is to serve all of Warrington. It was noted that it is. **DMo asked** if the free school is for children with mild issues. TL informed them that it is for children who are not able to be in a maintained school. HP stated that the Local Authority are currently spending a lot of money sending children out of the borough. Paul Green has worked closely with the trust in putting together the bid. It was noted that the setup at Wargrave House School is what it is hoped the free school will be like. It is important that the free school links into the SEN map in Warrington and provides appropriate support. It was noted that it is a competitive process and other trusts will have also submitted bids. MG felt that it is important that it doesn't destabilise the current places within the Designated Provisions. **MM asked** what the rationale was behind stopping it at 16 was. MG informed them that this is what the Local Authority wanted.

8. Structure Chart – update

A copy of the current structure chart was circulated to members. The chart will be updated to include the appointments approved today.

HP noted that he feels that there are no issues with carrying some vacancies.

DMo asked who made the decision for the CEO and Principal of Priestley to be split following MGs retirement. HP informed the members that it was always supposed to be a split role and it was never the intention to look for a joint role. It was felt that Priestley needs a full time Principal and that the current model was unsustainable.

Trustees have asked the CET to put together a proposal for recruiting the CEO. The Local Governing Board at Priestley will be recruiting the Principal. DM asked what the timescale is for appointment of the CEO. A proposal will be presented to trustees prior to the next Trust Board meeting.

9. Finance

a) 2018-2019 financial statement

It was reported that the external auditors presented their report to the committee. A clean report was given with no errors. The declaration of interest forms for trustees have been sent to the auditors. It is anticipated that the accounts will be signed off tomorrow.

The educational performance of the trust is included in the final report which demonstrates the focus of what is being achieved.

In terms of finances there are a couple of academies with deficit budgets and there are specific plans in place to address this. It was noted that this was also a recommendation from the auditors. **DMo asked** where the detail of the individual budgets can be found. DM reported that it is not a requirement to include this information in the annual report. Section 15 of the report lists the reserves.

It was reported that the pension fund liability has increased significantly and pensions have been re-valued. With these changes the trust benefits. One of the benefits for Priestley to convert to an academy was the underwriting of the pensions. **DMo asked** if this is guaranteed why is it reported. DM reported that it is an accounting rule that it has to be included.

MM noted that the annual report is a very detailed document which provides a lot of information about the work of the trust and its academies.

MG reported that in terms of school improvement work lead by AM and TL there has been some significant improvements across the academies.

It was noted that the trustees have approved the accounts. DM informed members that a break-down of the accounts will be transferred to a different return by 23 January. The accounts will then need to be submitted to Companies House. HP noted that any questions from the RSC are likely to be sent to him by the end of January.

10. Any other business

Membership and attendance

A discussion took place around attendance at Members meetings.

Action: MG to speak to SB about his position on the board

The meeting closed at 5pm

Signature: _____
Chair

Date: _____